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### *Global trends and local realities: Lessons about economic benefits, selves and identity from a Swiss context*

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#### Abstract

Inspired by the unexpected results of a standardized questionnaire survey of Swiss university students' motivation and attitudes toward English, the paper discusses the influence of global and local contexts on language learners' motivation and identity. As a result of the unprecedented spread of English as a foreign language (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006), and, more importantly, the underlying social and economic issues that it reflects, elements of the global context intermingle with local realities to create new learning experiences, unaccounted for by traditional research paradigms. Individuals find themselves at the convergence of multiple contexts that affect and are in turn affected by their language attitudes and identity as well as sense of self. The intricate relationships between contexts and individuals continue to gain emphasis in current approaches to language learning motivation (cf. Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015), which position L2 learnin in a new light, questioning the power and relevance of different motivational categories and also these of a generalizable theoretical model. The quantitative study presented in this paper explores interrelationships among key elements of the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009) and a number of motivational factors on the one hand, contrasting them against the economic and social background of the Swiss context on the other. The findings of the project reveal that such repositioning of the participants in the multicultural, plurilingual environment of Geneva and its socio-economic reality was indeed essential to the interpretation of the results since the extraordinary strength of external and societal factors in participants' motivational profile gained meaning only in the light of the particularities of the local context. Therefore, the paper showcases the potential of a broader perspective on L2 motivation and the importance of learner-context relationships.

*Keywords:* complex learning environments, language learning motivation, language learner identity, Swiss plurilingualism, multilingualism

## 1. Introduction

This paper was borne out of some highly unexpected results emerging from the analysis of a standardized questionnaire. Based on established L2 motivation constructs, the survey investigated university students' attitudes toward English in a multilingual environment and revealed unique trends that were difficult to interpret relying solely on traditional quantitative methodology. Situating these figures against the contextual background of the Swiss educational system and society, as well as the local setting of multilingual Geneva, uncovered intriguing patterns of learner-context relationships.

At the time of data collection, Swiss language policies were undergoing drastic changes, and the debate over the order in which foreign languages (FLs) are to be taught intensified once more in French speaking cantons. For a long time, mutual understanding among citizens and, therefore, learning *the language of the other* has been a priority in Swiss FL education. However, arguments for English, as the pragmatic choice, have become louder in recent years. Moreover, some French speakers view English not only as more useful and more relevant to modern life than German but also as a welcome alternative to Standard German, the status of which is constantly challenged by local Swiss German dialects.

All this demonstrates how deeply languages are embedded in their social context, and FL learning is no exception. As Ushioda (2009) points out, L2 motivation is "emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity" (p. 215). Therefore, this paper argues that thorough examination of contextual factors is indispensable to the study of L2 motivation processes in modern learning contexts. More importantly, however, it concludes that relationships between individuals and contexts are dynamic and reciprocal, and mapping their mechanics is central to our understanding of SLA. Perspectives in L2 motivation theory have been shifting toward such complex and dynamic views of language learning, despite prevalent notions of the internal-external divide in earlier frameworks.

## 2. L2 motivation research: Diversity of contexts and individuals in context

Traditional L2 motivation theories tended to categorize motives based on their origin or direction, in other words, on whether their source can be defined as

external or internal to the learner. Therefore, contextual factors have always been viewed as a key element although their role is conceptualized slightly differently. Sugita McEown, Noels, and Chaffee (2014) analyze the differences and convergences between three theoretical strands: Gardner's (2006) socio-educational model (SEM), self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self system. It is important to note that while these theories show a marked shift toward a learner-centered view of motivation, the language learning context also takes an increasingly central position.

In short, it can be concluded that theoretical developments have gradually moved away from the notion of a clear-cut division between internal and external factors in favor of a more complex representation of L2 motivation. Although contextual components are an integral part of the two dominant dimensions in SEM, they remain situated externally to the learner, either in the form of a target group of native speakers of which learners aspire to become members or as instrumental benefits they wish to access through language proficiency. Such approaches pose serious challenges to the investigation of modern L2 learning environments, where target groups are more distant and gains less well defined. Moreover, they fail to fully capture the relationship of individual and context.

The process of *internalization* (Ryan & Deci, 2000) blurs the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motives, placing the two categories at the opposite ends of a more complex scale (Sugita McEown et al., 2014) on which learners' motivation can fluctuate. This aspect of SDT not only demonstrates the changeable nature of motivation but also shows that the membranes separating the individual and the contexts that they participate in can be considered as similarly flexible and hazy. Dynamic theories of L2 motivation build on these two assumptions, redefining the construct both as a scene of learner identity construction that is prone to change and as a reflection of the interaction between learner and context(s). Moreover, as Dörnyei (2009, 2010) and Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) point out, the emergence of the *global* context (in addition to existing local, regional and national backgrounds) as a factor of identity creation (see also Lamb 2004, 2009) and L2 learning further enriches the spectrum of motivational influences.

Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system (2009) centers on two self-guides, both of which incorporate different aspects of contextual elements. The *ideal L2 self* measures the strength of learners' future vision (Dörnyei, 2014) of themselves as L2 users, while the *ought-to L2 self* represents learners' perceptions of the different expectations they are faced with. Both of these facets of learners' self-concept are contextually constructed and reflect the influence of the learning environment. Research investigating the relevance of

the two self guides in a range of modern FL contexts (cf. Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) showed the ideal L2 self to be a reliable predictor of motivated learning behavior. Although these studies continued to rely on traditional methods of data collection (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015), they represented a novel approach to language learning. Learner identity as a facet of L2 motivation was placed in the foreground, and contextual elements were recognized as powers shaping both.

Nevertheless, Ushioda (2009) warns that “we should not position the central participants in our research simply as language learners, since this is just one aspect of their identity” (p. 290). She also stresses that while models of L2 motivation integrate conceptual factors in the form of independent variables, these remain fixed background influences outside of learners’ control. In other words, it is imperative that SLA research regard individuals as active members of multiple contexts who shape their environment as much as they are shaped by it.

It is precisely this point of view that Dörnyei et al. (2015) take in their introduction to a recent volume exploring the potential of a dynamic systems approach to L2 motivation. Ushioda (2015) likens the relationship of individual and context to an ecosystem where interrelated influences act, reciprocally, both within the learner and between the learner and the environment. She also describes this type of research perspective as a shifting lens or a zooming device that can be used to investigate both learner-context interactions and intra-learner processes. This metaphor is especially apt since it reflects the multitude of concentric and overlapping contexts learners interact with. In this sense, L2 motivation is affected by not only the global and the immediate learning environment at hand but also by a range of contexts in between. Therefore, in my discussion of the context in which the Geneva study took place I propose to zoom in on participants step by step and explore some of the most relevant spheres that might impact their learning and attitudes.

### 3. Languages in Switzerland

#### 3.1. Swiss language learners: individuals in multiple contexts

Switzerland is often considered a site of widespread multilingualism and successful L2 teaching. However, as regional differences become more pronounced, questions of language use and learning become intricately tied to issues of milieu and identity. Swiss language learners thus find themselves at the vortex of multiple contexts, from strict, locally defined cultural settings to broader aspects of national and global identity. In addition, as members of these spheres, individuals themselves actively shape them as much as are shaped by them. Therefore, it is not surprising that linguistic practices follow highly diverse patterns in local settings in different parts

of the country. On the other hand, this also means that the particularities of the multiple contexts with which Swiss language learners interact need to be discussed before their motivation and attitudes can be fully understood.

No examination of contextual influences on modern FL learning can be complete without taking into account the *global status* of English. The spread of English as a foreign language (EFL) is indeed unprecedented and has serious implications for social and economic processes. It is also bound to impact learners' attitudes not only toward English but toward all other L2s. Some view this aspect of EFL as empowering (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006), while others argue that a language that can connect can also separate, leading to the marginalization and subjugation of nonspeakers (Phillipson, 2009). A detailed overview of the debate is beyond the scope of this paper and can be found in the works cited above. Nevertheless, whether proficiency in English is viewed as a fundamental need or a coveted goal, the motivational power of its status cannot be denied. Various motivational concepts reflect aspects of the issue, from the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, which gauge the importance of the language to learners' self-concept, to Yashima's (2009) international posture or the world citizenship/global village scale used in the present study, which embodies further attitudinal facets related to the spread of EFL. In addition, social networks, pop culture and English language media are also often seen as exceptional attractors, as are the world of science and professional communication. These can all be powerful motivators, but their influence hinges on "whether the pursuit of mutual intelligibility and participation in the global community are perceived as somehow a threat to, or an enrichment of, one's linguistic identity and sense of self" (Ushioda, 2006, p. 151).

However, since identity is also constructed at several levels and individuals' self-concept incorporates social as well as personal aspects, the role of the global status of English is bound to be complex. The global context has not only a direct influence on learners' attitudes but also an indirect one, dependent on both national and local cultural values. In the historically multilingual European context the European Language Portfolio (ELP ; cf. Breidbach, 2003; Ushioda, 2006) aims to bridge this gap by promoting individual plurilingualism. In contrast with the multilingualism of the community, the ELP focuses on the development individual language skills (at any level) in multiple languages. However, as the Swiss example testifies, plurilingualism can also be exercised at higher organizational levels. It can even become a symbol of social cohesion and a pillar of national identity.

### 3.2. The linguistic context: Speaking Swiss

Anchored in local and national cultural values, the issue of languages in Switzerland is a delicate one. Its history goes back to the time of Napoleon, who united the three

language regions (German, Italian and French) by force and thus created the first plurilingual state (Elmiger & Forster, 2005). Today, with four official languages (German, French, Italian and Romansh), the Swiss context remains just as intriguing in terms of FL research but also holds a number of surprises.

The first of these surprises is that despite the coordinating role of the national Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (CDIP), regulations on language, culture and education are formulated at the cantonal level. As a result, out of the 22 constitutionally monolingual cantons seventeen are German speaking and are separated from the four French speaking and the single Italian speaking cantons by the *Röstigraben*, the mythical border between the two culturally and linguistically different regions (Grin, 2010). French and German are both official languages in three bilingual cantons, a duality reflected in documents and road signs. The trilingual canton of Grisons (Graubünden in German, Grischun in written Romansh) has been the center of the fight for the preservation of Romansh and the initiative to support plurilingualism (cf. Grin, 2010). Last but not far from least, in cantons such as Geneva, where multinationals and NGOs abound, foreign residents account for a considerable portion of the population, further enriching the linguistic landscape.

As regards the linguistic compositions of the population, census results show that 63.7% are German L1 speakers, while 20.4% declared French, 6.5% Italian and 0.5% Romansh as their mother tongues (Lüdi & Werlen, 2005). It bears note that despite plurilingual trends participants were allowed only one option, although the question on languages used at home yielded comparable answers with a slight increase in national language use and 4.4% for English. These differences demonstrate the volume of second and third generation immigrants among Swiss residents.

The German-speaking cantons are also home to a wide range of local Swiss German dialects (or *the dialect*), the use of which is mutually exclusive with that of Standard German. In these areas 90.8% of Swiss residents speak the dialect but not Standard German at home (Lüdi & Werlen, 2005, p. 36), and while the former has always been a metaphor for the home and everyday life, the latter traditionally represented the professional sphere. However, in the twentieth century *schwyzertütsch*, as the dialect is called in Swiss German, started gaining ground and became an emblem of Swiss ideological and economic independence. It gradually replaced Standard German in a number of contexts, so much that French speakers have started to question the utility of learning Standard German.

As opposed to the linguistic duality of the German cantons, French speaking areas are highly multilingual. On average 18.4% of the population are of non-French mother tongue and 8% of residents speak another official language (Lüdi

& Werlen, 2005). Nationwide, foreigners constitute one fifth of the population and while most of them use French or Italian as a mother tongue, 37.7% speak a language other than the four official languages at home (Lüdi & Werlen, 2005). Such multilingual settings provide a unique background to language learning but also pose challenges to communication.

Heller (2003) and others speculate that the use of English could offer a solution, but a study of Swiss firms' communicative practices (Lüdi, Barth, Höchle, & Yanaprasart, 2009) found the case to be different, revealing that diversity and even linguistic virtuosity play an important role. Murray, Wegmüller, and Khan (2001, p. 13) confirm this, stating that English is rarely used for communication among Swiss interlocutors of different mother tongues. In addition, a series of studies (cf. Berthoud, Grin, & Lüdi, 2013) investigating the economic and social impact of such cultural and linguistic diversity concluded that Swiss plurilingualism is not only a genuine, living example of successful communication but also highly advantageous.

### 3.3. The social context: Swiss plurilingualism

Plurilingualism, as proposed by the ELP, has become a priority both in communicative practices and language teaching in Switzerland (Elmiger & Forster, 2005). The term covers significantly more than the mere coexistence of the four official languages and many dialects; it promotes equality among languages and raises awareness of their linguistic and social interrelationships (Breibach, 2003). It is an emblem of social cohesion and Swiss national identity. Four cantons are officially plurilingual, but Lüdi and Werlen (2005, p. 89) emphasize that this form of bi- or multilingualism does not necessarily equal true plurilingualism as long as it is restricted to a few official languages

However, studies on corporate communication (e.g., Lüdi et al., 2009; Pfefferli 2008, 2010) highlight the importance of plurilingualism in business dealings across linguistic borders and in multilingual settings. Their findings show that while employers rely on special corporate guidelines to enhance communicative efficiency, employers navigate these delicate situations using plurilingual communication techniques (Lüdi et al., 2009). The latter seem especially effective in successfully resolving communicative situations where no common language is available, even though the policy relative to these instances recommends the use of Standard German (Lüdi et al., 2009). Corporate multilingualism is an important feature of all three language regions. In French speaking areas, our context of interest, 29.9% of employees use German on a daily basis, whereas English is used by 27.5% and Italian by 11.8% (Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2009). In a similar vein, 13% of all professional communication takes place in English, 10% in German and 2% in Italian (Grin et al., 2009).

In sum, from a professional point of view, plurilingualism is an important asset for employers and employees at the same time. Statistics show that should all residents who speak another official language suddenly become monolingual, the loss could amount to as much as 10% of the country's GDP (Grin et al., 2009). On the other hand, plurilingualism also has social roots in Switzerland since active cooperation among linguistic regions and even more importantly the *willingness* to put such cooperation into place is key to national cohesion (Grin, 2014). It is also an inherent element of Swiss national identity, and therefore issues of FL teaching are always central to education policy.

### 3.4. The learning context: FL teaching in Switzerland

Cantonal language education policies, based on the recommendation of the CDIP to promote understanding among Swiss citizens, traditionally favored the other official language, mainly German or French, but also Italian. A historical overview (Elmiger & Forster, 2005), however, clearly demonstrates how the emergence of EFL gradually changed this balance. In 1997 the canton of Zurich announced its intention to introduce English as the first L2 taught. This change took effect two years later and primary schools in the canton were directed to teach English and another obligatory language as well as offer a third as an option. Although one official language was still mandatory, the order of introduction was not specified.

The CDIP, no longer able to reinstate the balance of language policies, appointed a number of regional Conferences to collaborate in redesigning the framework. The new regulations, to be implemented by the 2015 school year, require all cantons to introduce a national language and English by years 3 and 5 at the latest. These are no longer mere recommendations, although the choice of the first FL is left to the regions.

While completely in line with these regulations, the recent switch from French to English as the first FL in the cantons of Nidwalden and Thurgau brought the issue back to the agenda. Commenting on the debate, Grin (2014) observes that abandoning or even postponing official language instruction might have dire sociological, political and economic consequences. Nevertheless, many see English as the pragmatic choice for the first FL in Switzerland, despite research findings indicating otherwise.

### 3.5. The economic context: Language skills at the market

Arguments for the usefulness of English often rely on its global status and the sheer number of its speakers around the world. However, that ever increasing number also suggests that the language will not always remain in high demand,



and the figures cited in this section show that it might not even be so in all contexts at present. In addition, if the strength of English lies in the number of its speakers, other languages are just as important for communicating and doing business with the remaining 70% of the world (Grin, 2014). Therefore, I suggest that economic considerations should be reevaluated rather than dismissed, especially since FL education constitutes CHF 1.5 billion of the annual federal budget (Grin & Sfreddo, 1997). A more detailed discussion of economic aspects of language learning can be found in Grin (2003), and Csillagh (in press) explores their relevance to L2 motivation research. Nevertheless, let us briefly examine the profitability of English in Swiss corporate environments.

A recent study of more than 2000 companies revealed that Swiss official languages were used more often than English in communication across linguistic borders (Andres et al., 2005). Grin et al. (2009) also found official languages in higher demand. In the French speaking cantons there was a shortage of German skills at 54% of firms, while English skills were insufficient at 42%. Across the language border the figures were 77% for French as opposed to 51% for English. Revenue differentials showed a similar pattern as in French speaking Switzerland English skills resulted in an average salary increase of 10%, whereas proficiency in German was rewarded by a raise of 14% (Grin, 1999). In the German language regions these figures amounted to 12% against 17% for English and French respectively (Grin, 1999).

Thus it can be concluded that in the Swiss context official languages are both more powerful communication tools and a greater economic asset than English. Consequently, one can argue that if this is reflected in learners' attitudes and motivation, learning these languages should also correspond to different motivational dynamics. On the other hand, the previous sections showed that motivation is both individually and contextually constructed, based on perceptions and aspirations. It is therefore not merely a reflection of contextual factors but a complex system in which elements of multiple learner identities and contexts interact. From this person-in-context perspective (Ushioda, 2009), it is especially interesting to explore the motivational profile of university students in Geneva. First, they are close enough to entering the labor market but not yet too far removed from their school learning experience. Second, at the interface of a multitude of contextual spheres, the analysis of their motivational profile can shed light on the way these various contexts influence their self-concept and drive to learn English.

#### 4. The study

Initially designed as a link in a long tradition of research projects on L2 motivation investigating learners' attitudes in modern L2 contexts (cf. Dörnyei &

Ushioda, 2009), the study aimed at exploring a very special multilingual learning environment. However, it soon became apparent that L2 learning in Geneva is not only impacted by local multilingualism but also by a host of linguistic, social and economic issues. The somewhat unexpected results of the survey suggested that various contextual factors influence L2 motivation in intricate ways. A straightforward quantitative study therefore developed into an exploratory project on the interrelationships of motivational and contextual influences, with limitations inherent to such research designs. Nevertheless, its conclusions point toward new horizons for the examination of complex learning environments and demonstrate the potential of person-in-context research perspectives.

#### 4.1. Method

Students of four faculties at the University of Geneva were solicited to participate in the online survey during the fall of 2013. The link to a questionnaire consisting of 102 items was distributed to students via email. Data collection took place exclusively online by means of the web survey tool LimeSurvey (LimeSurvey Project Team, 2012) and was therefore completely anonymous.

#### 4.2. Participants

A total of 375 students from the Faculties of Law and Medicine, Sciences and SES (Economic and Social Sciences, two separate faculties as of January 1 2014) participated in the study. Their numbers per faculty, mother tongue and L2 level reported are listed in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. Students attending several faculties ( $n = 7$ ) were only taken into account where applicable.

Table 1 Number of participants by gender and faculty

Gender	Law	Medicine	Science	SES	Total
Male	27	20	52	23	122
Female	67	44	98	37	246
Total	94	64	150	60	368

Respondents' reported language skills and language use reflect the multilingual setting of the study. Only 24 (6.4%) participants were completely monolingual, while 68 (18.1%) spoke two, 136 (36.3%) three and 106 (28.3%) four languages. 35 participants (9.3%) reported competences in five languages, and 6 students spoke six to eight languages. As shown in Table 2, participants' L1 background was similarly diverse. Understandably, the majority of students listed French among their mother tongues, and although 298 (79.5%)

participants had only one L1, 69 (18.4%) reported two, with 6 students having three and 2 reporting four mother tongues. Students were also asked to rate their L2 skills on a 6-point scale adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference, and their answers are discussed in detail in the results section.

Table 2 Number of participants per reported L2 level and L1

L2 level	German	French	Italian	English	Other
A1 (1)	29	1	17	7	n/a
A2 (2)	34	3	13	14	n/a
B1 (3)	50	3	20	59	n/a
B2 (4)	48	10	14	74	n/a
C1 (5)	17	23	8	112	n/a
C2 (6)	9	62	4	62	n/a
Means L2	3.09	5.32	2.93	4.39	n/a
Total L2	187	102	76	328	103
Total L1	25	291	25	21	98

*Note.* n/a = nonapplicable

Nevertheless, one interesting aspect of the language data that should be mentioned here is the discrepancy between mother tongue and L2 learning on the one hand and L2 speaking and L2 learning on the other. The results showed that various L1s were also mentioned in the category of L2s learned at the moment, and, reversely, some L2s were being learned but not spoken by respondents. German was among the most frequent (28) of the latter kind, after the languages categorized as “other” (36). In addition, Swiss German dialects were treated in the same category as German throughout the analysis.

Nationality and citizenship are delicate issues in the Geneva context, so participants were asked about the place of their secondary schooling instead. For the purposes of the study, students who indicated Switzerland were treated as “Swiss.” The largest group was that of Swiss students at 256 (68.3%), while the majority of “foreigners” came from France, reflecting the social and economic ties between Geneva and the neighboring regions of France. All levels of university education and age groups (16-65) were represented, the average age of participants being 23.

#### 4.3. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was entirely in French and consisted of three parts. The first section focused on students’ demographic and linguistic background, while the second and third consisted of 11 5-point multiple item scales measuring attitudes toward English. These were developed as part of the author’s MA research in Hungary (Csillagh, 2010) and later translated and adapted to the

Geneva context. Their sources, reliability scores and the number of items included in the final analysis were as follows:

1. Motivated Learning Behavior (3 items; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .76$ )
2. Ideal L2 Self (4 items; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .87$ )
3. Ought-to L2 Self (3 items; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .64$ )
4. Attitudes to Learning English (3 items; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .91$ )
5. Attitudes Toward Traditional Target Groups (10 items; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .90$ )
6. International Posture (4 items; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Yashima, 2009;  $\alpha = .74$ )
7. Ethnocentrism (5 items; Ryan, 2009;  $\alpha = .81$ )
8. Global Village (4 items; Csillagh, 2010;  $\alpha = .81$ )
9. Willingness to Communicate (6 items; McCroskey, n.d.;  $\alpha = .93$ ).
10. Perceived Importance of Contact (3 items; Kormos & Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .76$ )
11. Direct Contact (21 items; Kormos and Csizér, 2008;  $\alpha = .89$ )

#### 4.4. Analysis

Data was collected through LimeSurvey (LimeSurvey Project Team, 2012), an online survey tool, and exported to Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Corporation, 2010), where cleaning and decoding took place. Reliability measures were controlled in SPSS (IBM Corp, 2013), and the software was used to compute scales and conduct all further analysis. While an exhaustive overview is beyond the scope of this paper, in the next section I review the most interesting results obtained through descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis.

#### 4.5. Results

As regards participants' language portfolio, results show it to be highly multilingual. This is true not only in terms of the proportion of L1s outlined above but also for FLs. One in four students (24.3%) reported skills in three L2s, while another 37.1% speak two and 26.7% speak one FL. Swiss official languages make up an important part of these (see Table 2), and a considerable number of participants (187) speak German as a FL. Their average level, B1, corresponds to the official school leaving exam (*maturité*) requirements. After English, with 53 students, German was also the most popular language currently learned. In addition, 20% of participants spoke Italian as an L2, the most frequently reported level being also B1, although lower levels were represented in a higher ratio than in the case of German. In contrast, French L2 speakers (102) rated their proficiency very high, which is unsurprising given the context of a French

language university. Nevertheless, English was by far the most popular L2 among participants, whose average level of B2 was the highest after French. Altogether 328 students spoke it as an L2, a remarkable one third of them (112) at C1 level. Displayed in Figure 1, language use in different contexts shows similar patterns although English was a surprisingly frequent means of communication compared to German.

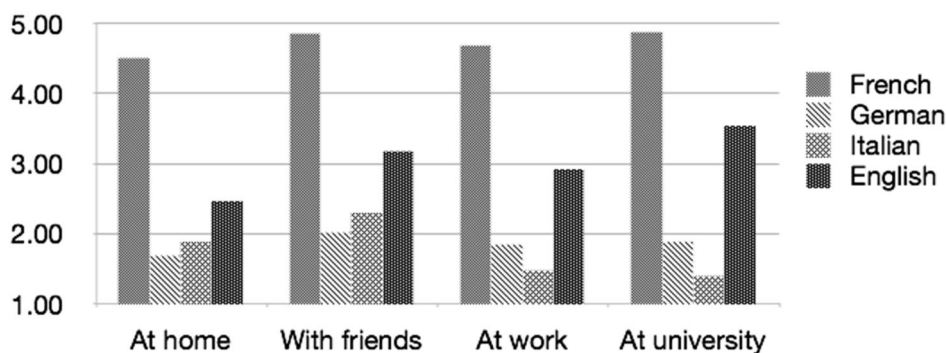


Figure 1 Reported frequency of language use in different contexts on a 5-point Likert scale

In order to better gauge participants' L2 skills, L1 speakers and students with no competence were initially excluded from the analysis. With the inclusion of nonspeakers, however, it became apparent that Swiss students considerably outperformed their international peers both in French and German, while there was no significant difference in the case of English. Students from different faculties also differed significantly regarding their skills in German and Italian. Competence in French was highest among medical students, but even the lowest averages for the faculties of Science and SES reached the C1 level. Law students reported the highest level German skills, followed by Medicine and the SES. Law was also the strongest faculty in terms of English skills (B2) although the results were high throughout all subsamples. These results are summarized in Table 3.

With the exception of direct contact and ethnocentrism, all the attitudinal scales achieved high results. Further analysis of the items measuring the ideal L2 self showed that visions of the future (4.6) and career prospects (4.5) were the strongest aspects of the construct. Figure 2 compares the attitudinal scales from the highest to the lowest, also reflecting nonspeakers' responses where applicable.

Table 3 L2 levels per faculty and place of secondary education (Csillagh, in press)

Faculty	Place of secondary education		L2 levels (A1-C2)			
			German	French	Italian	English
Law	Abroad	<i>M</i>	1.83	5.57	0.35	4.71
		<i>N</i>	23	14	23	21
		<i>SD</i>	1.90	0.65	1.11	1.19
	Switzerland	<i>M</i>	1.92	5.58	0.74	4.08
		<i>N</i>	66	24	65	65
		<i>SD</i>	1.89	1.10	1.54	1.97
Medicine	Abroad	<i>M</i>	1.79	6.00	0.07	3.80
		<i>N</i>	14	2	15	15
		<i>SD</i>	1.67	0.00	0.26	1.78
	Switzerland	<i>M</i>	1.88	5.88	0.98	4.11
		<i>N</i>	48	8	48	45
		<i>SD</i>	2.01	0.35	1.64	1.63
Science	Abroad	<i>M</i>	0.84	4.52	0.47	3.79
		<i>N</i>	63	21	60	61
		<i>SD</i>	1.52	1.25	1.16	1.87
	Switzerland	<i>M</i>	1.67	5.54	0.62	3.77
		<i>N</i>	85	13	79	87
		<i>SD</i>	1.78	1.20	1.41	1.70
SES	Abroad	<i>M</i>	0.64	4.83	0.45	3.83
		<i>N</i>	11	6	11	12
		<i>SD</i>	1.03	0.98	1.51	1.70
	Switzerland	<i>M</i>	2.13	5.33	0.65	4.19
		<i>N</i>	40	12	46	47
		<i>SD</i>	2.00	0.78	1.32	1.44

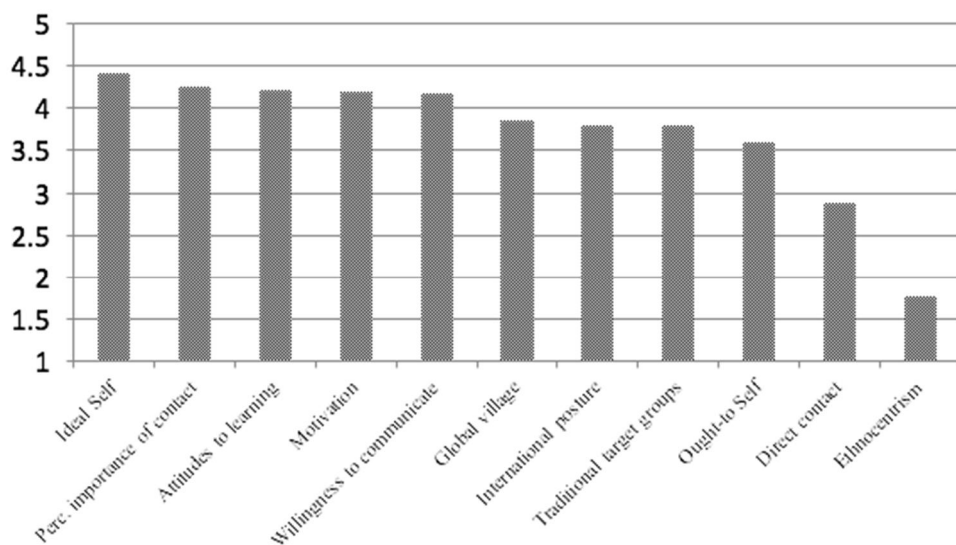


Figure 2 Mean values of the attitudinal scales, from highest to lowest

Interestingly, as Figure 3 shows, place of secondary education was a significant factor, and the self-guide was stronger in the case of foreign students, whereas the reverse was true regarding traditional target groups. It is unsurprising that foreign participants also had more frequent direct contact with English, both during their studies and while traveling. There were significant differences between students from different faculties as well, and they are shown in Figure 4.

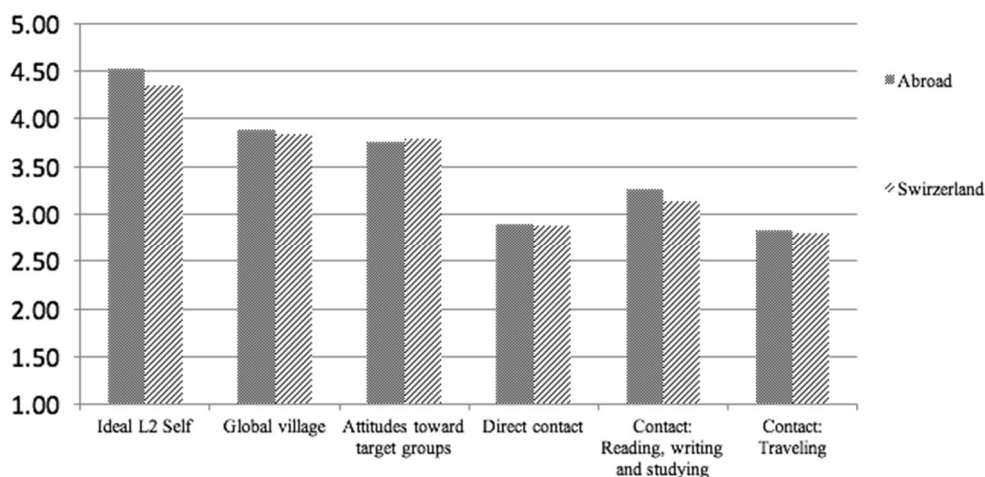


Figure 3 Mean values per place of secondary education

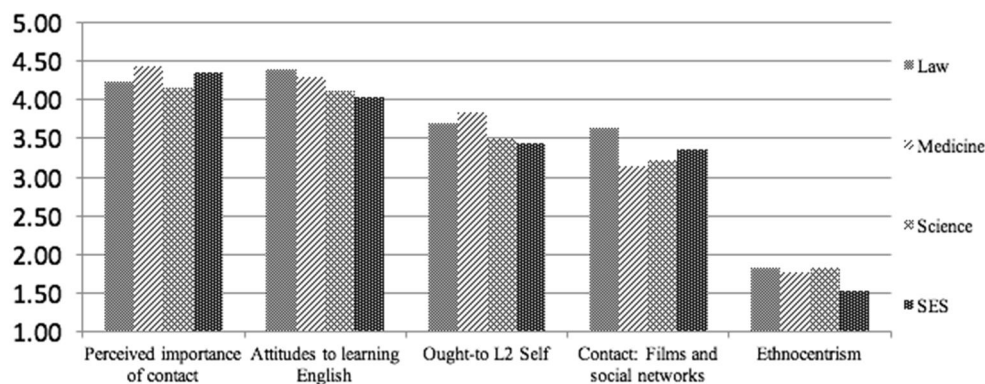


Figure 4 Mean values per faculty

Participants' attitudes to learning English were the most positive at the Faculty of Law and medical students' ought-to L2 self was especially strong at 3.8, though the scale scored remarkably high overall. Last but not least, *t* tests confirmed that students currently engaged in learning German were more

motivated to learn English. Moreover, correlational analysis revealed further links between the attitudinal variables. The coefficients are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 Correlational coefficients (Pearson's) for the attitudinal scales

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11A	11B	11C	11D
1 Motivated Learning Behavior	.58** [ns]	.39**	.40**	.33**	.26**	.32**	[ns]	.39**	[ns]	.18**	.21**	[ns]	
2 Attitudes to Learning English		.34**	.34**	.37**	.37**	.33**	.23**	-.15**	.55**	.28**	.26**	.38**	.22**
3 Willingness to Communicate			.22**	.22**	.18**	.31**	[ns]	-.14**	.25**	.45**	.30**	.33**	.22**
4 Ideal L2 Self				.46**	.43**	.38**	.32**	-.23**	.32**	.35**	.21**	.28**	.14**
5 Ought-to L2 Self					.50**	.43**	.36**	-.18**	.41**	.28**	.27**	.28**	.21**
6 Global Village						.41**	.47**	-.24**	.44**	.19**	.27**	.32**	.13**
7 Perceived Importance of Contact							.27**	-.47**	.38**	.23**	.22**	.16**	.30**
8 International Posture								-.15**	.36**	[ns]	.14**	.14**	[ns]
9 Ethnocentrism									-.26**	[ns]	-.14**	[ns]	-.11*
10 Attitudes Toward Traditional Target Groups										.21**	.20**	.30**	.27**
11A Read-write (Direct Contact)											.47**	.58**	.37**
11B Travel (Direct Contact)												.42**	.30**
11C Films-social (Direct Contact)													.31**
11D Talk about (Direct Contact)													

Notes. \* Significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level (2-tailed); \*\* significant at the  $p \leq .01$  level (2-tailed); ns = nonsignificant.

As expected, the strongest correlation was found between motivation and attitudes to learning English. Nevertheless, among the rest of the scales, motivated learning behavior was linked first and foremost to students' ought-to L2 self, while it also had a less strong but still marked connection to the ideal L2 self. In addition, the two self-guides were also strongly related to one another and attitudes to learning English. Interestingly, both participants' positive attitudes to native speakers and their international orientation, represented by international posture and the global village, emerged as factors linked not only to motivation but also the self-guides. The ought-to L2 self maintained especially strong relationships with the scales on the global village and traditional target groups as well as international posture and the perceived importance of language contact.

## 5. Discussion

Some of these results corresponded to research findings obtained in other learning contexts, whereas others exceeded expectations or even proved difficult to explain relying solely on quantitative techniques. One thing, however, is clear: They all demonstrate the power and influence of contextual factors on language learning and attitudes. Moreover, the study underlines the importance of theoretical perspectives that allow for a person-in-context view of L2 motivation and the reciprocal relationships between the individual and the environment.



I argued that Swiss language learners live at the confluence of multiple contexts of which they are active members. Each of these spheres represents a different influence on their attitudes and self-concept, and therefore manifests in different trends. However, it is important to note that, as members, participants also shape their environment, and the results of the study reflect the complexity of these relationships.

First of all, the individual and collective plurilingualism of the respondents clearly shows the relevance of the multilingual environment in which the study took place. Nevertheless, this plurilingualism takes peculiar forms, which shed light on the intricate links between individual and context as well as on the complexity of the current debate on Swiss language education. Official languages are at the heart of the phenomenon, with English playing an important role, although a number of other non-Swiss languages are represented as well. This, on the one hand, highlights the success of an educational program promoting languages of local and global importance at the same time, especially since Swiss students consistently outperformed foreigners.

On the other hand, the study found that university students are conscious decision makers in their language learning. Many continue to perfect their skills after secondary school, and some take on new languages, either as heritage languages or simply as additional L2s. Moreover, the figures show that participants also used their languages with high versatility in different contexts though questions concerning the dynamics of this plurilingual lifestyle remain unanswered, and we know little about respondents' individual experiences. Interestingly, these trends do not seem to be linked in any way to language policies at the University of Geneva, where, with only a few exceptions, French remains the language of instruction. Therefore, it can be argued that it is the students who *bring* plurilingualism to the institution, thus enriching their environment and adding elements to the context.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that their goals are any less professional. Indeed, comparisons between the different faculties are indicative of the impact of the local economic milieu. Swiss official languages were most popular among students in professions concerned with local affairs and in fields where skilled labor is in high demand locally. By contrast, science students fell behind on most language scales, despite the international nature of science and the often-cited relevance of English to the field. At the same time, career prospects and future visions were the strongest aspects of students' self-concept and the most highly ranked among all the items.

This orientation was especially prevalent among Swiss students, who not only surpassed their international peers in language skills but also showed different trends in their attitudes. In contrast with the results of previous

studies, students at the University of Geneva had a strong ought-to self, which was also closely linked to their motivation. Again, this trend was most distinct in the Swiss group, while foreign students reported more “traditional” motivational profiles. But for this one indicator, it could be argued that this emphasis on expectations, responsibilities and social pressure might simply be the outcome of the serious tone of the university environment and participants’ goal orientedness. However, more detailed analysis of the context shows that considerations of career prospects, economic benefits and responsibilities play an important role in Swiss society.

University students are particularly aware of these values, as at this stage in their life they are considered, first and foremost, *students*, who are also preparing for the plunge into the real world of work and responsibility. They have strong self-concepts, which are, nevertheless, in continuous flux as students strive to find their place in society and become active members of the community. This also means that they are about to get involved in even more contexts, enriching their personality and the environments they interact with at the same time. It is not difficult to imagine that as the next generation of active Swiss citizens, the views and values they bring will be highly important to the future of society. In most cases these new contexts present students with yet unexplored sites of language use and even learning, and, therefore, their continued study is central to person-in-context perspectives of L2 motivation. Unfortunately, traditional research methods offer little in terms of tools to faithfully document and present such life-long journeys of L2 learning and identity creation.

The strength and key role of the ought-to L2 self also underlines its importance as a motivational measure. Since the self-guide acts, by definition, as a gatekeeper between the outside and the inside world, it might be the most intriguing motivational construct to research from a person-in-context view. Understandably, its relevance varies from one cultural region to another, but in contexts such as the Swiss one, where personal goals are often regarded as secondary to societal concerns, it might prove a stronger predictor of motivated learning behavior.

Similarly, Swiss students’ remarkably favorable attitudes to traditional native speaker target groups as well as the global village show that learners’ orientations are often more complex than SLA theory tends to claim. Unlike teachers, who are reluctant to accept global varieties (Murray, 2003), university students recognize the importance of the global status of English. At the same time, they are also aware of the financial and cultural power of native speaker communities. This way they are representatives of a new generation of language learners who nimbly navigate the currents of constantly merging and separating contexts, all the while adapting and creating their new environment. These complex and flexible relationships between individuals and contexts present modern SLA research with new challenges, both theoretical and methodological. The results discussed in this

section indicate that there is a lot more to investigate than traditional research methods allow, highlighting the need for new perspectives in SLA.

## 6. Conclusions: From statistics to stories

The study this paper reports on was initially designed with a simple goal in mind: to explore Swiss university students' motivational profile. However, thanks to the linguistic and cultural complexity of the Geneva context, it soon became apparent that modern language learning is far from simple, and the project took on new objectives. These were manifold, and it is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss them all. Nevertheless, the preliminary results examined here carry two very strong messages.

First of all, the results testify to the key role different contextual elements play in university students' attitudes and motivation. Further analysis of the data is needed in order to establish the direction and exact strength of these relationships, but it is already clear that participants' responses show interesting patterns that can only be analyzed and explained in the light of their contextual background. Therefore, the study lends empirical support to Ushioda's (2015) call for more system-sensitive approaches of L2 motivation. Moreover, the results are indicative of the ways in which learners actively interact with the contexts they participate in, echoing emerging trends in the field that point toward a broader reinterpretation of L2 learning.

Secondly, the study demonstrates the limitations of traditional approaches to researching modern learner identities in complex learning environments. Until very recently L2 motivation research had little to offer in terms of alternatives, but the number of new techniques is on the rise (cf. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, & Henry, 2015). The second point I would like to make is therefore that a new perspective on modern L2 contexts is necessary not only in a theoretical sense but also in the methodological tools employed to investigate them. The quantitative analysis failed to clarify all the issues and raised a number of questions, which will require further investigation of the established factors as well as through fresh methodology. One option certainly lies in emerging methodologies (MacIntyre et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there is a case to be made for complementary research designs (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012) and multifocal qualitative techniques (Ushioda, 2015). Last but not least, reinterpretations of the traditional quantitative paradigm (e.g., Irie & Ryan, 2015) help recycle powerful analytical tools to examine more complex structural dynamics. The fact that the questions are more challenging and the techniques of investigation more intricate means that we are closer to the hot core in our understanding of L2 motivation. This theoretical and methodological rethinking of the process of L2 learning opens new horizons for researchers and practitioners alike.

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